

## Pilot Episode

### “GUESS WHO’S COMING TO SHANKRI-LA”

SPA MAIN BUSINESS OFFICE

**ZACH** (with **MATTHIAS**) reports for his first day. He encounters the many eccentric, colorful, frightening and compulsive characters who populate the place.

Enigmatic & capable yet mercurially menacing, Henry Callahan (late 20’s) is commonly known as **DUCKSAUCE**. One of the prisoners, he is quite indispensable to the running of the office – as he has mad computer skills. In fact, he’s able to hack and manipulate into just about any electronic or electrical device/system there – which he does for ego, amusement and to keep everyone else off balance.

It’s clear the young man knows why Zach has arrived – and has no intention of welcoming someone who will attempt to add yet another unwelcome layer of control over his situation and behavior.

DuckSauce attempts to intimidate Zach from the first moment, though Zach remains fairly unfazed. When the office manager (Georgina) enters to welcome and orient Zach, DuckSauce transfers his juvenile actions to Matthias, trying to mess with the dog’s head, for example by calling up noisy cats onto the computer monitor. He has little success; Matthias is just too cool to fall for his cheap tricks.

**GEORGINA BEAUCHAMP** is in her late 50’s. She appears disheveled and forgetful; though she is the spa’s office manager, she wears a ratty bathrobe and slippers – with a wig that doesn’t seem to want to stay put. DuckSauce enjoys messing with her computer

as well – watching her get flustered and annoyed is one of his small daily joys.

Zach is also puzzled by the bizarre pantomime antics of a short, middle-aged man who silently flits around the office from place to place, ridiculously ‘attempting’ to remain unseen. Yet he is always in plain sight, obviously visible to anyone who so much as glances in his direction. His name is **SAPERSTEIN** and at this point, Zach has no idea what to make of his shtick.

The man eventually catches DuckSauce’s notice. He consults his computer – then excitedly calls out that he’s “found Saperstein” and therefore....has **WON** the *Yardbird Competition* for the week. As Saperstein silently flees the office, DuckSauce is elated about the prize he’s won – a free “spa day” during which he’ll be pampered and tended to. Georgina doesn’t seem to care; over the PA she blandly announces his winning. Zach remains quite bewildered, though intrigued.

Georgina provides Zach (and the audience) with necessary background about how the place operates, the prisoners, Guo’s attitude towards the unmanageable ones and the stakes regarding the upcoming fund-raising evening.

Georgina receives a PA page and leaves the office. Zach takes this opportunity to let DuckSauce know he is “on to him.” The intimidation battle between the two is currently at a draw.

But just then, **IVAN WASHINGTON** barges in. Another prisoner: he’s huge, powerful and scary – it appears he and DuckSauce are mortal enemies. DuckSauce almost always backs down, knowing he’s no match for this hulk of a man.

Ivan is pissed off as usual: he’s sure DuckSauce has likely been cheating at these

competitions, using his computer skills and access to schedules in order to predict where Saperstein will appear.

Watching all this, Zach continues absorbing information - then Ivan begins to hassle him as well. After a short verbal pissing contest between the two, Ivan turns to leave but collides with **TZI**, a delivery man entering with food from *Fong's Chinese Kitchen*. Ivan doesn't acknowledge anything and casually keeps going.

But once he's outside, we see that Ivan has lifted Tzi's ornate Chinese-letter- carved butterfly knife.

Inside the office, Georgina has returned – and she joins in what becomes a seemingly confused exchange between Tzi and DuckSauce. The truth is that no one ordered food; Tzi has come there deliberately to search for DuckSauce – with sinister intent.

(Here we get the first threads of a running plotline: DuckSauce apparently knows how to access certain damning files from *the Cloud* [where he hid them after stealing them himself]. Tzi is one of **LEO FONG'S** henchmen sent to get that knowledge – and then to likely “eliminate” Duck.)

We learn that DuckSauce used to work for Leo Fong and understand that he's been in hiding from the Chinese gangster for years; the files he stole can take down Fong – and others. Yet Duck still seems unaware of the present danger – other than that of eating Fong's crappy food.

Georgina suggests someone else on staff may have been the one who placed this order. But she's willing to pay for it.

Now that Tzi has located DuckSauce, the next phase would be to isolate and interrogate

him in private – sometime later. So Tzi appears to take his leave; he's also profoundly upset upon realizing his knife is missing.

Georgina is happy to see her computer is working again, the problem (created earlier by Duck) now having been fixed by Zach. She orders DuckSauce out to accompany Zach to meet Guo. Duck complains, as he wants his SPA DAY now – but he obeys and the two, plus Matthias, set off.

#### A DISTANT PART OF THE SPA GROUNDS

DuckSauce, Zach and Matthias arrive outside the doors leading to an 'internal' garden within the spa walls. This location has its own enclosed boundaries, entered through enormous, ornate Chinese carved doors within an artistic archway. Zach admires the craftsmanship. This is the cue for DuckSauce to rattle off a well-rehearsed history of the doors and of Guo's family in Communist China.

Saperstein is yards away in the desert, Zach catches sight of him doing his 'hiding' routine among some cacti. He is soaking wet; Zach wonders aloud about the water source – DuckSauce seems to shine it on.

Ivan shows up pushing heavy carts full of supplies – after a bit more harassment towards DuckSauce, Ivan and the rest all enter the garden.

#### THE MEDITATION GARDEN

Within the lush surroundings, Zach is surprised to discover that Guo Nishi is not alone and the 'deep spiritual vibe' he expected this meeting to have – is marred by several men

in suits with no-nonsense demeanors. Whatever spirituality and balance he thought to find is powerfully diluted by two of the men obviously standing guard, while the third is in urgent conversation with Guo. Zach quickly recognizes *politics* when he sees it in process.

**TODD** is the man engrossed in tense conversation with Guo. Officially, he's a "liason" between her and the Governor. Though he basically makes it possible for the governor to avoid having to personally deal with Guo's complaints, including: lack of funding for the spa and the 'caliber' of the felons she must currently take on as workers – she wants to go back to the good old days of having white-collar criminals working for her.

Zach tries to overhear as much as he can, though he is soon unable – thanks to more close-by squabbling between DuckSauce and Ivan. However, a new idea takes root when Zach notices some subtle but definitely hidden familiarity between Ivan and Todd – when the latter passes by with his guards, exiting the garden to a waiting helicopter.

Zach has been witness to several instances of intrigue in the short time he's been here – he wonders what it's about, who is connected to whom – and why?

Speaking of connections, a quite-social LEMUR appears and perches on Ivan's shoulder. The man gives it treats. And *did Zach actually SEE* Ivan take a ribbon of paper from the animal's hand – and deftly slip it into his pocket?

The lemur soon hops over to Matthias, making concerted efforts to help the dog understand *this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship* – and that's not open to question.

Once Guo is finally free to meet and address Zach, her welcome is polite but the

conversation which follows is scattered: she tries relating her fascinating background life to Zach, but it continually gets mixed up with events and characters with which she must currently contend.

Both realize her mind is too consumed with worry and plans about arrangements for THE fund-raiser. In part, this is why Zach has been brought aboard.

She is further annoyed that DuckSauce isn't currently where he should be – i.e., helping Chef Giovanni in the kitchen. She orders him to leave and get there ASAP – while she continues speaking with Zach. In response, Zach offers to accompany DuckSauce and help in whatever way he can. He is “certain their conversation can be continued later.” Guo seems to appreciate that.

As they both take their leave, DuckSauce makes a nasty crack about Zach being “such a suck-up.”

On their way out, Ivan hands Zach a wicker basket of produce to bring to Chef Giovanni.

## THE KITCHEN OF THE MAIN DINING HALL

It's nearly total chaos, as the restaurant staff must function around construction workers constantly cutting through the kitchen on their ways to and from the attached dining room.

**CHEF GIOVANNI** is a skilled chef and a prisoner; he has the quick bad temper of both. Zach observes him barking at an attractive, mid-thirties waitress, **DEENA RASKOLNIKOV**. She's a local who works there voluntarily. Unafraid of Chef, she

throws it right back at him whenever he tries to bully her.

Zach learns that, among his other skills, DuckSauce doubles as a sous-chef. Chef Giovanni explodes over Duck's 'uneven' squid-stuffing – he worries that if the squid isn't perfect, he'll be sent back to prison. Actually, pretty much every conceivable culinary failure Chef can imagine – ends with his return to prison.

Chef hates the idea of being supervised and *overseen* by anyone. Privately to DuckSauce, Chef says he wants leverage against Zach. DuckSauce regretfully reports all he's managed to find are low credit scores and some bizarre but incomplete story about sabotage at the school Zach used to head up.

Zach observes the prevalent craziness, typical among the kitchen staff. A local teen who works the grill while blasting metal through his earbuds is **MARLON HAWKING PELLUCID**. He *hates* "Marlon" and insists on being addressed as Hawk but he has yet to earn that noble reference (he's a post-millennial). In fact, his middle name was an act of pure optimism by his parents – he was named for *Stephen Hawking*.

As Marlon stands over the hot grill, he wipes his facial sweat with a burger bun, then tosses it on the fire. Chef sees it and heads for him with a butcher knife – a moment away from murder, Chef spears the bun and pulls it from the grill. Ranting while waving the impaled bun in the teen's face at the end of a 12-inch blade is not that abnormal an occurrence in this place.

Chef complains bitterly to Zach about Guo, how she refuses to pay enough to hire the trained staff he needs. Zach listens patiently, aware he must build a rapport with the convicts.

It's moving along – until Chef gets a glimpse of Matthias wandering round the kitchen with the lemur on his back. Then he hits the crazy switch again. Zach moves the animals out the back door.

While there, he notices Ivan show up with a wheelbarrow full of dirt and plants. Zach sees him bury something under a plant.

Back inside, we learn that Chef has a pending assault case (brought against him by a badly-scalded food critic). His on-site legal ally is an elderly regular guest, referred to as **BARRISTER WALLACE** – who enjoys the unique privilege of wandering through the kitchen any time – because Chef Giovanni will pump him for legal advice. Which Wallace just loves dispensing in his cultured Hyde Park London dialect.

Chef feels himself lucky to have found Wallace here. Fortunately (or maybe not), Chef doesn't know that Wallace isn't his real name or that he's never been a lawyer. In fact, *Hubert Lubasek* from Union City New Jersey played *Barrister Wallace* on a soap opera which ran for thirty-eight seasons. So at least every once in a while, the legal knowledge Chef gets for free is somewhat correct.

Does Hubert KNOW he's pretending – or has he in fact *become* Barrister Wallace? Guo and Georgina have no idea, but his presence seems to have a calming and entertaining effect on guests and staff alike. Besides, it happens only rarely (as it is right now) that he shows up *half*-dressed for court, i.e., wearing nothing below the waist.

(Every so often, he and Saperstein can be seen engaging in unique and animated conversations – which no onlooker can seem to interpret at all.)

Passing by on his way back in, Zach asks Deena if she can use his help wrapping and



fastening a tablecloth around the old man. She thanks him, but no.

Zach no longer sees anything which happens here as strange. But then again...

Zach makes small talk with DuckSauce – who is busy sewing calamari. We hear an *old-timey car horn* honk twice over the speaker system. That signal gets Duck on his feet and he quickly heads off towards the bathroom.

Chef informs Zach that Duck has a digestive condition and must be alerted as to exactly WHEN he must make a pit stop (three times a day – or many, **many** innocents will suffer).

Chef casually wanders outside – for a break, concealing that he carries a *calamari needle* and thread plus a bottle of Ouzo.

## BEHIND THE RESTAURANT

Though Ivan is no longer there, Chef takes a careful look around to be sure. He moves to a hidden spot behind some crates.

Chef Giovanni is not at all surprised to find Tzi lying on his side in pain. His face is battered – plus there's a long, deep gash in his butt. He and Chef obviously know each other.

As Chef works on disinfecting his wounds with ouzo – and then sewing him up, much is revealed, mostly by Tzi.

It was Ivan who inflicted the wound on him (and in fact with Tzi's own knife) – just as Tzi was about to get the drop on DuckSauce. Ivan came out of nowhere and jumped him

first.

(We understand that while Tzi works openly for Leo Fong, Chef is also part of that team in an ‘undercover’ role. Eventually, we’ll learn that Chef is only on board here in order to gain protection and cash for his family)

As Chef continues tending to Tzi’s wounds, both men wonder what connection Ivan has to all this – and for whom is he working? Why would he even care what happens to Ducksauce? Those two hate each other.

But assuming it is true, just HOW can Ivan be receiving and sending information to anyone on the outside?

More speculation: they both seem willing to consider that Leo Fong may not be at the top of the gangster food chain.

At this point, Chef can only promise to keep a closer watch on DuckSauce. When Tzi is sufficiently patched up, he takes off as quickly as he can.

## IN THE KITCHEN

Chef returns and checks up on Zach, who proudly shows off several trays of properly stuffed and sewn calamari. To himself, Zach casually wonders why Chef’s break lasted so long.

## SCHOOLHOUSE ‘DORMS’ (at dawn)

Our four prisoners: Ivan, Ducksauce, Chef Giovanni and Saperstein are asleep in four cots. The door opens, shining unbearable sunlight on them.

Two retired prison guards, **Pao Pao** and **T-Bob** loudly enter, calling for them all to wake. Following on their heels is Todd; lastly Zach and Matthias.

Zach is now dressed in the white uniform of the spa's employees.

Todd delivers a *pep/warning* talk to the inmates about the importance of them shaping up and learning to behave. He runs down the relevant info about the upcoming fundraiser and how they'll be expected to mix with and impress important, wealthy people who can keep this program going – IF – everyone behaves as is expected of them.

Todd makes it clear that failure in this area means back-to-prison. Period.

At its conclusion, Todd hands over the file of each prisoner to Zach – signifying “they’re all yours.”

**It is time now for Zach to step up:** from the information in their files (which he of course already knows), he speaks about each one individually: their crimes, their histories and most important, the personal issues each of them need to work on – not just to make it through the fund-raiser, but (in his mind) to actually to set them on a better path in life. Old Jesuit-brother-habits die hard.

We learn how Henry Callahan “became” DuckSauce – which is part of the larger reveal of his early connections to Leo Fong.

As Zach announces their past crimes one-by-one, we are reminded of just how dangerous they all could be – given just the right (or wrong) circumstances.

WITHIN THE COMING DAYS –

Zach devises creative and effective ways to deal with the individual resistance, personality disorders, denials and plain old resentment borne by each prisoner.

He must cut through the animosity between DuckSauce and Ivan, Chef Giovanni's megalomania and Saperstein's highly questionable grip on reality, on the universe and his place in it.

Zach, (with the help of Matthias' herding instincts) is *Henry Higgins on steroids* – as he runs the four of them through all sorts of behavioral challenges – as the days count down to the important event.

Exercise, discipline, individual “missions” suited to their unique psyches – Zach employs anything and everything. He becomes a counselor, therapist, wrangler, babysitter, squad commander and ego-tamer.

When it becomes clear that Saperstein believes he's a shape-shifter, Zach devises an important mission, suitable only to the best shape-shifter in the Southwest.

He must even learn to deal with DuckSauce's “externally regulated” biological imperative schedule.

He learns that Chef Giovanni “cooks anger-management literature for breakfast for its high fiber count.” So he must help him find non-violent ways of dealing with criticism – or even with a diner who adds salt to the Chef's Eggs Benedict dish.

All of them resist Zach. All of them fight with each other. He never relents; but continues putting them through the paces of learning how to mix with other human beings.

Many comedic and tense vignettes play out in and around the kitchen, dining room and barracks. Zach is always listening for anything said which might shed more light upon the intrigues he knows exist throughout this place.

#### FINALLY – THEY APPEAR READY

The night before the event, Zach and his victorious crew take a well-earned drink and restful gaze out at the desert night. Even the lemur comes by – as if to review the troops before battle.

He seems to approve – then customarily climbs aboard Ivan’s shoulders.

Zach savors his sense of accomplishment and then..., “Hang on” – did he just *imagine* seeing Ivan hand the lemur something tiny before it jumped off and disappeared into the desert night?

End Episode One